

There are four “big ideas” we have discussed in the K-12 advisory committee that we would like to submit to the steering committee for feedback. While we have done substantive work in these areas, this document does not contain a detailed listing of all the policy implications of these ideas, which we will submit in follow-up documents.

Big Idea #1 – Change the definition of “*Basic Education*”

With HB 1209 in 1993 we changed the definition of what we expect our children to know and be able to do. It is established law in Washington that our constitution requires the state to fund “basic education.” It is time to bring these two into alignment.

Consequently, we propose five measurable goals that a new definition of basic education would require the state to provide funding adequate to provide all children the opportunity to meet these goals. These are system goals, and not specific requirements for individual children.

Goal 1: All students will enter kindergarten with the interpersonal, language, early literacy, and thinking skills needed to succeed.

Goal 2: All students will transition from third grade proficient in reading and mathematics and with demonstrated ability to function successfully as responsible participants in their learning.

Goal 3: All students will transition from eighth grade with proficiency in core academic subjects, demonstrated citizenship skills, and an initial plan for high school and beyond.

Goal 4: All students will graduate with both the multicultural and international perspectives and skills needed to live, learn, and work in a global society.

Goal 5: All students will complete a rigorous high school course of study with proficiencies in core academic skills needed to successfully enter a post-high school education program or their choice of a career pathway for the 21st century.

The commitment to a new definition of basic education is significant – it requires the state, not local voters, to provide an ample and reliable stream of funds to meet these needs. It is time that we stepped up to this requirement.

To implement these new goals and the changed definition of basic education, we propose three additional big ideas:

1. **Re-engineer our schools based on research-driven and evidence based investments** tied to significant new accountability for the use of the new resources. This involves a significant change to our funding system and includes fixing significant problems in the current one.
2. **Restructure our system of educator development and compensation** so that we are providing compensation adequate to attract and retain highly competent

people, and use the new compensation as part of an incentive system to significantly enhance the quality of instruction in Washington.

3. **Realign curriculum and instructional supports** to be more intentional in our instruction and to meet the ambitious goals we are setting.

These ideas are quite expensive and need significant work to make sure that we get them right. We should phase our investments in carefully over the next 6-10 years with a planned investment program. These ideas should be viewed as a package, not as an a la carte menu; consequently we should implement them initially in pilot districts where the union and the board agree to all components. We can manage our investment by focusing the initial investment in districts that have significant challenges and who are willing to participate.

If you read this document carefully you should see a consistent theme: drive more resources, be it money, teaching talent, whatever, to our most challenged schools and students, not less as we do today.

Big Idea #2: Re-engineer our schools based on research-driven and evidence based investments

Provide schools with the resources they need to succeed. Use the consultant's report as a framework to design a proposal. Key elements:

- Student-driven resource allocation: tutors and ESL support based on poverty and ESL population per building drives significantly more resources to schools that have significantly greater needs.
- Provide significant additional time to students who need to catch up or want to get ahead. No child behind our baseline expectations should be denied additional resources necessary to catch up.
- All-day kindergarten
- Class size of 15/K-3 and 25/4-12. This would most certainly be phased in slowly to provide time to hire and train adequate staff and to provide facilities.
- Build accountability into the system
 - Building-based bonuses for staff and management for meeting student learning goals.
 - Gradual requirement to adhere to evidence-based model in failing schools.
- Fix broken aspects of our current system.
 - Eliminate salary and levy grandfathering.
 - Provide funding at the school level so that it is transparent.
 - Require school-based actual accounting so that parents and voters can see exactly how resources are allocated and spent.
 - Provide adequate special education and transportation funding

Big Idea #3: Restructure our system of educator development and compensation

Attract high-caliber applicants to teaching with higher starting and ending salaries.

- Implement state-wide licensing and pro-cert system tied to compensation bumps
- National board bump
- Eventual bumps based on state-wide evaluation of effective teaching skill replace education-based bumps. It is important to do this in a way that does not negatively affect existing educators, and could be a requirement for new teachers, with options for existing ones.
- Bonuses for high-quality teachers working in hard to staff schools.
- Pay actual average classified staff salaries to districts
- Apply a regional adjustment factor to salaries

Make sure that we are providing the resources needed for teachers and principals to grow and improve their instructional skills over their careers.

- Substantial resources dedicated to professional development and teacher/principal support/coaching. The expectation is that this is at least ten additional days of intensive instructional development.

Big Idea #4: Realign curriculum and instructional supports

Implement a state-wide curriculum so we can do real professional development and so that students who move between schools and districts are not lost. There could be options here, but it must be easier to choose a curriculum that works.

Increase rigor in the 11th and 12th grades so that our students are prepared for college or a career path that leads to a living wage. This will involve

- Participation in one of the national programs setting higher standards like the American Diploma Project or the “High Schools that Work” program from SREB. This would set higher graduation requirements and eliminate the “general track” where we allow students to wander.
- Dual-credit programs like tech-prep, running start, etc.
- Making new resources available to small and remote schools that have difficulty staffing highly rigorous programs. A significant enhancement to our on-line options could help here.

As part of meeting goal number 4 provide access to world languages beyond just French, German, and Spanish to all children in Washington, particularly in the early grades, ideally taking advantage of the new immigrants in our communities.

Finally pay attention to appropriate career and technical education that helps students be prepared for living wage careers and stay motivated in schools. It is critical that we do not allow this to be a backwater, but a motivational tool.

Make online courses available to all students in Washington who want to catch up or get ahead, including providing access to the courseware in non-traditional settings like libraries, Boys and Girls clubs, community centers, etc. This can provide significant new ways to personalize the education we offer to students, enhancing their interests and keeping them involved.

Keeping it Alive

We must build into what we do a structural way to provide consistent review of our progress and the effectiveness of the strategies we are taking. In particular, the new finance system should be reviewed every 6 years to ensure we are meeting the requirements of our commitment to “basic education.”